

Recreational Shellfishing in Wellfleet

Welcome to shellfishing in Wellfleet! We are proud of the naturally occurring, wild oysters and quahog clams that live in our harbor and the long-standing harvesting traditions that allow you to bring them home to your table. The goal of the Wellfleet Shellfish Department is to maintain a sustainable shellfishery for today and generations to come. To achieve this goal, we are charged with overseeing shellfishing activities and enforcing both state and town regulations, such as legal shellfish sizes, catch limits, and seasonal openings and closings of different areas.

We also devote a significant part of our financial resources to recreational shellfish propagation. Propagation means undertaking initiatives to add more oysters and quahog clams to the estuaries and flats of Wellfleet Harbor, so they are available for harvesting by permit holders.

The information here is to educate you on how to be successful out on the flats. You will receive periodic emails to alert you to openings and closings and our propagation activities, etc. Don't hesitate to call us with questions at 508-349-0325.

IMPORTANT TAKE-AWAYS

1. Taking of Seed Prohibited: Oysters must measure at least three inches long, quahogs must measure at least one inch across the hinge width, soft shell clams (steamers) must measure at least two inches long, and bay scallops must have an easily discernable (by sight and touch) annual growth ring. By allowing shellfish to mature to legal sizes, we can reasonably assume that the animal has spawned, thus contributing to Wellfleet Harbor's wild shellfish populations.
2. Limits: Each recreational permit holder is allowed one 10-quart basket a week of mixed shellfish. Once shellfish is in your basket, it is considered your catch; therefore, you should measure all shellfish before placing it in your basket. The new week begins on Sundays.
3. Open/Closed Days: From June 1 to September 30, recreational shellfishing can only take place at the Indian Neck recreational shellfishing area and only on Sundays and Wednesdays. From October 1 through May 31, the Indian Neck recreational shellfishing area and all South Wellfleet is open to recreational shellfishing seven days a week. From the last Sunday in October to April 30, Chipman's Cove is also open to recreational harvest, seven days/week.
4. Other Regulations: Please familiarize yourself with our regulations. The high points are also printed on the permit you receive each year.

The Shellfish Department takes a violation of these regulations very seriously. Non-compliance can affect the abundance of the resource, which is not only an asset of the municipality, but is also a significant component of the Wellfleet economy. If you are found in violation of any of our regulations and depending on the severity of the violation, your permit will either be marked and noted, which will constitute a written warning, or we will issue you a ticket for \$50, and/or we will confiscate your catch. If you are found in violation of a regulation again – and again depending on severity and previous violation, you will be issued a ticket and/or have your catch confiscated according to the Town's regulations, Section 11.5. Penalty Fees. Read complete regulations here:

<https://www.wellfleet-ma.gov/shellfish-department/pages/regulations-laws>

We thank you in advance for your help in ensuring a prolific future for our wild shellfish in Wellfleet Harbor. We are undertaking many propagation efforts throughout the year to supplement what Mother Nature provides so that there are plenty of legal shellfish for you all to harvest. It takes a village!



Measuring 3" oysters using a circle gauge



Measuring 1" quahog across the hinge



Measuring 3" oysters using a rectangle gauge



Measuring 2" soft shell clam



Photo: one peck/10-quart basket of quahogs

Wellfleet Recreational Shellfishing Areas

